



# Information Brief

## Wraparound

*Students with significant emotional and behavioral problems are a small (1-7 percent) yet demanding portion of a school's population. A slightly larger percentage (5-15 percent) includes those students at-risk for developing such problems as well. One process called "wraparound" promises improved outcomes for these populations. Wraparound is a way of working with students and their families to tailor services to their needs. One or more agencies, including the school, collaborate with a family to design and implement a service plan. School personnel interested in an effective process to prevent potentially disruptive and even violent behavior and to create safe, disciplined school environments should consider integrating the wraparound process into their continuum of programs and services.*

**CRITICAL ELEMENTS ADDRESSED:** *The school has a variety of programs and services intended to prevent or intervene early with students' social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties.*

- *The school uses a collaborative planning and problem solving approach as a response to ongoing behavior problems.*
- *The school, in collaboration with the community, provides a full and accessible array of specialized programs and services to address the needs of students experiencing social, emotional and/or behavioral problems.*
- *A community-based comprehensive system of integrated services is linked with schools in the district.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Everyday in schools across the country, educators confront problems posed by students with challenging behavior. Although schools may have effective school-wide prevention and early intervention practices in place, there always will be a small group of youngsters who continue to have behavioral difficulties, some of which are significant and complex.

In order to address these problems effectively, schools, families, and community agencies must become partners in the child's education and personal-social development. Wraparound is an effective process for providing comprehensive support for children with emotional problems across all areas of their lives. School-based wraparound planning complements a system of positive behavior supports that includes proactive school-wide practices along with a problem solving approach to problem behaviors.

### WHAT IS WRAPAROUND?

*Wraparound* is a philosophy of care that results in a uniquely designed, individualized plan for a child and family. It "reflects the voices and choices of the child and family" (Eber, et al, 2001). Contrary to what is often thought, wraparound is *not* a set of programs and services. Instead, its focus is on the planning process. This process has its roots in the concept of a system of care, a community-based approach wherein a variety of professionals and agencies in collaboration with families deliver comprehensive and integrated services.

Wraparound is a family-centered, strength-based approach. It guides service planning for students with, or at-risk for, emotional and behavioral disabilities and their families, and it involves all the services and strategies needed to meet their needs. Today, schools,

mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, and other human service agencies are integrating wraparound philosophy and process into existing program structures (Burns & Goldman, 1999).

*Community-Based Wraparound:* Traditionally, community-based agencies in the mental health or child welfare systems initiate the wraparound planning process. Often, schools have been passive, if not at times reticent, participants in that process, perhaps because school personnel believe that attending to mental health issues requires specialized expertise. They also may be concerned that the services designed through a wraparound process will result in unrealistic expectations, undue burden, and excessive costs being placed on them. On the other hand, personnel from the human and social service systems also fail to include school personnel in the wraparound process.

*School-Based Wraparound:* Schools can play an integral role in any wraparound process. Schools not only are the places where youngsters spend a large portion of their waking hours, but they also are the places where a child's mental health or behavioral problems will manifest themselves. Schools often provide students with the best opportunity to connect with the community (Eber, 1998). The school, in fact, is a likely place for this process to occur. While community-based wraparound plans may provide a general school plan that only addresses where the child goes to school, more in-depth, school-based wraparound planning can address necessary support so that a student can participate successfully in the classroom and other school settings. For these

reasons, there has been an increasing focus on school-based wraparound services.

### THE TEAM AND WRAPAROUND

The wraparound process brings together teachers, families and community representatives to form a planning team. Membership on a team varies from student to student. In part, this is because the family guides the determination of the specific team composition. With the assistance of a designated wraparound facilitator or resource coordinator, the family may select friends, neighbors, extended family members, church members, or colleagues from work in addition to agency staff who are already involved with their child. A parent-educator or parent advocate, and the child's special education case manager may be selected when applicable. This team works to develop a behavior support plan by achieving consensus on:

- specific and individualized outcomes,
- interventions based on the strengths and needs of the family and designed to ameliorate the concerns, and
- the supports needed to implement effectively the interventions designed.

### THE WRAPAROUND PLAN

Wraparound plans integrate and blend the myriad of perspectives brought to the process by the members of the team. Plans are practical and action-oriented and represent a binding commitment to follow through. They are, at the same time, comprehensive, family-centered and strength-based.

*Life Domains in Wraparound Planning:* The planning process includes examination of all areas of a child's life, termed "life domains." Teams decide whether or not a family has needs in each of these domains.

Life Domains		
Family	School	Community
• <b>Basic Needs</b>	• <b>Medical/Health</b>	
• <b>Recreational</b>	• <b>Safety</b>	
• <b>Social/Emotional</b>	• <b>Legal</b>	
• <b>Educational/Vocational</b>	• <b>Spiritual/Cultural</b>	
• <b>Other Problem Areas</b>		

*Family-Centered/Strength-Based Planning:* Key to the success of any wraparound plan is the extent to which the family is involved. Instead of being told what their problems and needs are and how they will be resolved, families actively engage in the planning process.

Listen to their stories - their dreams, visions, and goals; their strengths; what is working or what has worked

### LEARN MORE ABOUT IT:

- **Web sites:** Illinois EBD Network: <http://www.ebdnetwork-il.org>
- **In this Handbook:** See additional briefs, especially the *Continuum of Programs and Services*, *Comprehensive Programming*, *Positive Behavioral Supports*, *Risk-Focused Prevention*, and *Early Intervention* in this section. In other sections of the manual, please refer to *Early Warning*, *Timely Response*, *Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide*, and "Success4's Critical Elements."

before; whom they want on the team; and what options they wish to explore. The needs of all family members are considered across all domains, thus making this a family-centered rather than a child-centered process.

Together, team members identify and prioritize needs. Then the team brainstorms options for services, supports, and resources. These may range from keeping a journal to participating in a karate class at the local YMCA to becoming involved in psychotherapy at a mental health clinic. School-based options are important elements of any effective wraparound plan. Only options based on the strengths of the family should be selected. This strength-based approach increases the likelihood that the plan will succeed.

### FIT WITHIN EXISTING SYSTEMS

The challenge to school leaders is to integrate the wraparound process into existing school practices and reorient staff to a different way of thinking. The most logical place to begin is to make it an integral part of the school's problem-solving/solution-focused approach to working with students with special needs. Although initially educators applied the process to students with the most complex needs, recent application by schools has extended to work with those at-risk who are not yet involved in special education, juvenile justice, mental health, or other child service systems.

Wraparound is a good fit for schools that have adopted a Positive Behavioral Supports approach to preventing and intervening in behavior challenges. Both focus on systems change, capacity building, outcome driven strategies and strength-based approaches. Positive behavior strategies are important components of wrap-around plans. Team involvement, coupled with the use of a problem-solving/solution-focused process, makes wraparound and PBS highly compatible. Both also underscore the need for skilled behavior specialists in the schools (Eber, 2001).

### SUMMARY

Wraparound is a process, not a set of programs and services, designed to meet the needs of students with challenging behavior and their families. This family-centered, strength-based approach is receiving increasing attention as a viable and effective school-based way to work with at-risk students and those with emotional and behavioral disabilities.